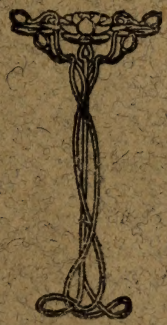
MY WISH

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

F. MERNER



May God with peace and plenty bless
Who choose this booklet to possess.

STRATFORD, ONT., CANADA

1914

not in Hawaii. which has another book of poems by this author.

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By F. MERNER.

My Wish and Other Poems

MY WISH

HAD I my wish—oh, then, I'd love to be
In words and phrases apt, for writing fitted;
And thinking, striving, working bold and free,
'Gainst ev'ry sham and ev'ry evil pitted,
I fain would tell, in accents clear and strong,
Of human rights that ofttimes are withheld,
By cunning craft, or stealth, from that great throng
—E'en though, in simple worth, quite unexcelled—
Who live their lives in quiet, humble sphere
Of toil, yes, ceaseless toil, from year to year.

To wrong condemn, and always right uphold,
Unfearing 'gainst all vice and outrage bold,
To take my stand, to fight, to battle hard,
Would be my constant aim, were I a bard:
Yea, naught should e'er escape my vision keen,
Which, lurking in the dark, could not be seen
By vulgar eyes; but which, in essence real,
Proved evil sore that poisons human weal.

'Twould be my task, with busy, tireless pen,
The mask of falsehood to disclose; and then
All shameless guilt to paint with master stroke,
That brazen struts 'neath each deceiver's cloak;
The cause, to champion, of the suff'ring mass,
'Gainst subtle robberies of a selfish class.
That right might win and wrong would quickly cease,
Should spur me on, my diligence increase.

'Twould be my pride, unceasingly to point
The way of truth and right; to soothe and calm
Rash emotion's surging storm, and to anoint
The eye of blinded reason with the balm
Of sanity and light; the tortuous track
Of gross deceit in lurid gleams revealed,
Should aye from threat'ning dangers warn men back,
To choose the boon calm thought and virtue yield;
Till true content, and peace, and love should reign
On hearths of guileless lives unmarred by stain.

The poor, the sad, the sorrowing, the sick—
For them, I fear, 'twere difficult to pick
The fitting word of comfort to be written,
The word that would bring hope—or cheer the smitten;
Yet, to dispel one single morbid thought,
'Twere surely well this service to have wrought;
No greater joy to man could come than this,
To know that duty done was not amiss.

Duty! Life's watchword true in ev'ry sphere,—
'Tis sad to think how oft we fail to hear;
The high, the low, the rich, the poor—yea all,
Should heed her warning note, her clarion call;
Thus Nature fashioned us: we each must act
Our part; nor can escape the simple fact,
That not to do, nor strive our best to give,
Were talents wasted hence, but half to live.

THE MUSIC OF NATURE

THE purest symphony all creation fills,
With music sweet, refined, all nature thrills;
The song of bird, the rain, the roaring gale,—
Of things create, what voice the ear doth hail—
All—all glorious are, and music-laden,
Endeared to age, and loved by youth and maiden.

Yet but an earnest, they, of that grand song,
That universal dwells all things among;
For all the works of God that eye doth see,
In beauty, grace and sweetest harmony
Abound; and to responsive souls distil
Rich melodies, that charm, enchant and thrill;
Unknown to ear are they, but to inner hearing,
Deep hidden in the soul, heaven-born appearing.

From him that hath gone forth in reverent mood,
And there, in nature's realm, hath wondering stood,
This soothing harmony, this holy strain,
Calls forth his true soul's chaste and glad refrain;
Full well he knows, full well he feels it true,
That thanks and praise are nature's right and due
For song, too exquisite for mortal ears,
Yet flowing on, the rapture of the years.

'Tis untold bliss, in unison to be,
With nature's beauty scenes, with nature's glee;
And higher, holier music, this, than chant
Of human voice, however resonant.

Couldst thou, O man, but pause in thy pursuit,
And view thy soul, so poor and destitute,
Thy shrunken mind, to one sole object strained,
Then thou mightst see that naught, alas! is gained
By madd'ning rush for wealth or high estate;
Mightst know thy loss so dire, ere it be too late
To turn away, and spurn a course like this,
For life that grander is and crowned with bliss;
That lacketh not the hour for communion sweet
With scenes, remote from crowded mart and street,
Where woody slopes and hills, and valleys wide,
Anew, the shrivelled soul and mind provide
With nourishment, exalting and divine;
And thou mightst know a richer blessing thine.

The chorus of the ages would be thine
While feasting thus on superb nature's wine;
A new and richer life would expansive flow

Into that being, that erstwhile did not know
The bliss, the happiness, the joy profound,
In great creation's plan harmonious found;
And blighting greed, and dwarfing sordidness,
To noble thinking and true manliness,
Would yield; then would poor starveling grow to giant,
Much less on pelf and more on self reliant,
But praising God for all the good extant
In gladsome nature's grand and glorious chant.

WITH THE BABIES IN A FLAT

HO! Sing a song of babies!
Babies here, babies there,
Babies everywhere;
Babies rolling on the floor,
Babies in the corridor,
Babies lean, and babies fat,
Oh, what fun in our flat.

In the morn and all day long,
We do hear their splendid song,
Oh, what pleasure, oh, what bliss,
Just to hear them crow and hiss;
But when they cry with all their force,
With raptures we are seized, of course;
Yes, then we're filled with ecstasy
In such splendid luck to be.

Babies here, babies there,
Babies tied upon a chair,
Babies sitting on the stairs,
Babies single and in pairs;
To right, to left, above, below,
Oh, what joy it doth bestow
To know we ne'er shall lonely be
With babies, babies, as you see.

And oft, oft in the stilly night—
Oh, then there's naught can us affright,

For all the ghosts and goblins weird,
That were by all our forbears feared,
Have been made to wilt and fade
Before the babies' brave brigade.

And when at last they're all asleep,
And humbly we to bed do creep,
And weary, think the din is o'er,
We foolishly begin to snore,
Or glide into a pleasant dream,
Then baby wakes and gets up steam;
Baby ne'er a soul will rob,
Baby's always on the job:
Oh, what joy, what rapturous bliss,
Living in a place like this.

Now sing a song of polliwogs,
Of carpet tacks and painted hogs,—
Please do not think me impolite
Because this ditty I indite;
I did not mean to criticize
The little imps of tiny size,
But there be grown-ups, not a few,
Who tramp about and bellow too;
To make a noise these fools delight,
They've no regard for a neighbor's right,
But act as though they owned the town
And think it smart to play the clown;
Into the day they turn the night
As if they had gone crazy quite.

These should be made to walk a crack
For four straight days, with pack on back,
Without a minute's time to sleep
While on their weary tramp they keep;
Then sent to school to be advised,
They're in a land that's civilized.
So ends my song.—The babies dear,
All innocent, need have no fear;
They rule the roost, and so they may,
God bless the babies, I do say.

THE FUTURE—AN IDEAL

LET meditation cease; for vain the dreams
Of vanished past. This hour more fitting seems
For onward toil—season apt to now conclude
For time unborn, the choice of attitude.
Henceforth to live from day to day, to lend
A helping hand; in simple joys to spend
The passing days and years; to do, while here,
What hand can find, the world to aid or cheer;
To never swerve from path of right, nor deign
To be the slave of custom void and vain,—
Yea, this my first, my sacred choice shall be,
While living, toiling, striving bold and free.
I'll know in forest, field and mountain grand
—Glad heritage of this, our splendid land—
Refining charm of sweetest nature's song
That says, here all is well' and naught is wrong;
In gentle humor's kindly play, I'll find
A sweet relief and balm for soul or mind.

To act and hope; to think, to know, to feel
One's own will come in fortune's fairer deal,
This wisdom is, and true philosophy,
And purest proof of faithful constancy.
Yet, wealth or outward circumstance should not,
Nor can not change the state of our true lot;
Nor stress of poverty, nor illness can,
In hidden heart and soul of inmost man,
The happiness of a meek resigned state,
In peril place, far less obliterate;
For howe'er dark and dull this present day
To-morrow's sun shall shine with brightn'ing ray;
As storm-clouds black and fierce, that soon pass by,
Fast followed are by calm and azure sky,
So grief's brief night, that may surround our way,
Doth advent swift, presage, of radiant day;
Then let us learn this cheering thought to prize,
'Yond thing of now—sweet hope—thing enduring lies,
And hill or plain, yea, all on earth we see,
Mere transient shadow is of what shall be.

CHILDHOOD ON THE FARM

IN riper years, we love to turn
To scenes that in fond memory burn;
The days of youth, we'd fain embrace
While stealthy age, we hence would chase.

On the dear old farm of golden days,
We'd live again, 'mid nature's ways;—
'Mid smiling mead, 'mid flow'ry wood,
Where stately trees like sentinels stood.

In retrospect I see it all,
The old log-house, doomed, alas! to fall,
Since 'mid the scent of orchard bloom,
A new home stood, of ampler room.

The weather-beaten barn, the shed,
And ev'ry beast on farm, that's bred
Before my pleased fancy spring,
In old-time friendship's welcoming.

The gladd'ning fields, the pastures gay,
Return as 'twere but yesterday,
Not many, many years ago,
I watched their abundant fruitage grow.

And thus an image clear I see
Of ev'rything that used to be,
In those sweet days of simple life,
With rural joys and pleasures rife.

They were the days of honest toil,
The days when hardships could not foil
The hope that fills all loyal hearts,
And courage true and strength imparts.

Primeval wood, by arduous toil,
Once cleared away from virgin soil,
The varied tasks of husbandry
Called forth a friendly rivalry.

The woodman's axe, now put aside,
Each neighbor with his neighbor vied,
And essayed still with growing zest,
To make his farm the country's best.

The stumps and stones were soon removed,
E'en ev'rything that hindrance proved,
And well I know the part I bore,
The land to free from ev'ry sore.

With courage and with faith men wrought,
'Gainst ev'ry obstacle they fought,
Right gladly did their acres till,
And conquered all by force of will.

And as the seasons circled round,
In each, employment meet was found,
In spring, in summer, and in gold
Of autumn, and in winter's cold.

And though their pastimes were but few,
They now and then a frolic knew,
When dance and song did time relieve,
Or games and chats, on winter's eve.

And had the merry quilting bee,
Where stitched and sang with care-free glee,
Fair country maidens, who, at e'en,
With sturdy youths, shared joyous scene.

But in the charms of nature kind,
Enjoyment real and true we find,
And warmth and cheer that's better far
Than chasing pleasure's fickle star.

Yea, this to me was purer joy,
That I could eye and ear employ,
'Mid beauties rare on ev'ry hand,
That strewed and decked our pleasant land.

'Twas oft my happy lot to go
Through field and heath, and where did flow

The rippling stream, that wound its way
Through fen and wood, with songsters gay.

Then would I feel: whate'er may grieve,
Fond nature can my heart relieve,
And 'tis a lasting joy to be
With her in perfect harmony.

My friend, with home in country's heart,
In peace canst live, from noise apart;
Oh, thank thy God for boon so great,
Beyond all human estimate.

Amid the city's stifling air,
The grind, the daily round of care,
There is no place can equal this,
We seek in vain such unmarred bliss.

Now pick we up the thread that's dropped,
Our story shall not yet be stopped;
Life's springtime we would further view,
Review of mem'ry's store renew.

We note how people worked and prayed,
And firmly good foundation laid;
How oft from school return was made
In haste, that we might give our aid.

And sometimes, too, with healthful play,
Did children pass the time away;
Played hide-and-seek and other games,
Of which scarce need to tell their names.

But oft were we obliged to share
In toil's demands; compelled to bear
Our part, yet cheerfully gave thanks
For life we spiced with youthful pranks.

And though the years sped one by one,
Yet slow, to youth, seemed time's smooth run,
And ev'rything that dullness chased,
Was gladly hailed and soon embraced.

In school, with all its many tasks,
Where boy or girl oft wondering asks
Why 'tis this irksome, weary grind,
E'en there, we variation find.

But in the business of the farm,
By frequent change, was endless charm;
In time of seed, when reaping corn,
Each season, were new duties born.

In early days of budding spring,
When 'gins to yield stern winter's king,
The maples tall, in wakening wood,
Yield forth their tribute, rich and good.

Then was it joy, indeed, to be
In sugar-bush; and very glee,
To share in sweets, and nectar quaff,
Or taffy munch—'twould make you laugh.

And many things our hearts to cheer,
Perchance would happen in the year;
When trilled the birds in summer's praise,
In time of autumn's mellowing haze,—

And e'en in term of mantling snow,
Through pastimes and through work did flow,
Meseems at times, an interest sane,
To-day's mad rush can never gain.

Yes, in those good old days we spent
On simple things, more merriment
Than now; and well do I recall
Much wholesome fun, that did befall.

And constantly now reappear
Long vanished sights; be't headstrong steer,
Or fractious colt, or whatsoe'er
It be, revives with trueness rare.

Sometimes we swimming went, and splashed
About, we brothers three; or dashed

Right down the lane to railroad track,
In childish sport—and then raced back.

Nor was there dearth of flesh or fruit;
In streamlet, myriad fish to suit,
While plums grew in profusion wild,
And berries dear to heart of child.

Treat unforgot: potatoes dug
With care, from nursing soil-bed snug,
Then roasted well in ashes hot,
From burning stumps quite freely got.

By means like this would boys abate
The longing keen to renovate
Their inner selves; and no king's board
More toothsome tubers doth afford.

Each year came time of hallowed night,
When ghosts and spectral pumpkins fright—
In smiling autumn, whose plenteous store,
Not seldom choicest blessings bore.

And first, let loud the praises ring
For apple, of all fruits the king;
For though it proved poor Adam's fall,
It is the finest of them all.

Ah! frequently did we steal down
To cellar, where, deep-gold and brown,
The juicy favorites tempting lay;
Then quick contrived to slip away.

'Twas not a sin, two, three, or more,
To swiftly spirit through the door,
For boys were boys then, as they're now,
No void in stomach would allow.

Such childhood's light delinquencies,
That knew not fine legalities,
Would make it breach of moral law
To suck brown cider through a straw.

Once more to country life give laud,
And ev'rything on farm applaud,—
The horses proud, the cows, the sheep,
All things that run, or fly, or creep.

Again let us this truth assert,
From which there's naught can us divert:
From fullest, sanest life men part
When they lose touch with nature's heart.

Long have the days of childhood passed,
Fond ties that were, been broken fast;
And grave reflections now recall
The sorrows that mankind befall.

Grim reaper Death, no hand can stay,
And one by one, they've passed away,—
A father dear, two sisters, brother,
And kindest, truest, noblest mother.

Oh! I can ne'er in words express
That mother's love and tenderness;
Nor can I give the reverence due
To her—best parent child e'er knew.

Remembrance keen, remains to-day,
How she did teach me to obey;
And how she counselled, how she prayed,
Her wish for me before God laid.

Now let come sunshine or come rain,
I firmly trust 'twas not in vain,
To tell these recollections o'er,
In simple tale of days of yore;
So straightway I now end this lay
And bid you all a kind good-day.

O SING! O SING!

O SING a song of spring!
O sing! O sing! O sing!
Of white rose and of red,
In beauty's pathway spread;
O sing the grace of daffodil,
The soothing sound of murmuring rill,—
Let these your soul with praises fill.

Rejoice and sing, yea, gladly sing
Whilst beauty dwells in ev'rything;
The fields, the hills, the leafy trees—
Could one be sad 'mid things like these?
Gone be all grief and discontent,
No more o'er past make vain lament,
No more be time in mourning spent;
But sing, O sing of blessings rife,
And sing the coming close of strife;
O sing of God and Endless Life.